

**UINTAH BASIN  
SAGE GROUSE  
LOCAL WORKING  
GROUP**

Planning/update  
meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, May 19, 2004

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

**Place:** County Building North Conference Room

**Members Present:**

**Boyd Kitchen – USU Extension**

**Brian Maxfield – UDWR**

**Clayton Chidester – UBAOG**

**David Allison – Consultant (Uintah County)**

**Jim Brown – NRCS**

**Scott Chamberlain – SITLA**

**Scott Chew – Rancher, Landowner**

**Stephanie Tomkinson – Questar**

**Steve Strong – BLM VFO**

**Todd Black – USU Extension**

**Deena McMullen – IPAMS**

**Mike Tamillos – USDA WS**

**Mike Bodenchuk – USDA WS**

**Darlene Burns – Uintah County**

**Walt Donaldson - UDWR**

**Information Presented**

- Presentation by Brian Maxfield, UDWR: 2004 lek data/counts
- Discussion with USDA Wildlife Services: their role in our plan
- Individual assignments: discussion/progress report

**Discussion Highlights**

Rich Baxter was not able to attend this meeting; we will reschedule his presentation on Strawberry valley for one of our next meetings.

Brian Maxfield presented the info that he has compiled for the 2004 lek count. He does not have any information from the tribe and is still waiting on counts for 3 leks on Diamond Mountain. But with most of the data in, he was able to conclude that, overall, counts are up.

Counts are up from last year in the following areas:

- Anthro Mountain
- Book Cliffs
- Diamond Mountain
- Blue Mountain
- Three Corners (substantial increase in this area, does it have something to do with the burns?)

Counts remain the same as last year in the following areas:

- Deadman Bench
- Halfway Hollow

Brian stated that the improved numbers are actually a surprise because according to the historical trends, he expected to see a decline this year. He noted the extra effort put into counting leks this year made a difference. Brian should have complete results for the next meeting and will share that with us then.

Mike Bodenchuk, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), stated their department has dedicated a person to Sage Grouse conservation efforts. He discussed the following topics:

- Predation management efforts for Sage Grouse are area specific.
- Predation management by aerial gunning of mammalian predators.
- Predation management by poisoning hard boiled eggs with DRC 13-39, specifically targeting Ravens. This program has been very successful when done repeatedly. When Ravens are controlled nest success increases to about 72%.
- The Sage Grouse numbers in the Strawberry valley area are in trouble because of the predators, not habitat, the habitat is very good. Foxes seem to be the biggest problem right now.
- WS recognizes they cannot eliminate all predators, but if kept under control, it may help the Sage Grouse come back to a healthy, sustainable population.

As I was preparing these minutes, I was informed that the public meeting on “Range Management Systems and Techniques” that was scheduled for 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, May 26, 2004, at the Western Park in Vernal has been cancelled

but will be rescheduled.

The seminar will be given by Deseret Land and Livestock of Woodruff, Utah and the Great Basin Research Center from Ephraim, Utah.

While the group was discussing this seminar and their intended projects, we decided we want to monitor the results of it. To do this, we will need to gather baseline data before the project begins. Todd has collars that can be used and Brian said he would be willing to help collar the birds. If additional help is needed, we will work through Rich Etchberger to see if any of the wildlife students at USU Uintah Basin would like to help.

Scott discussed the information he found in researching the change in types of grazing from sheep to cattle and how that relates to predator control and Sage Grouse populations. As an overall observation, there is a direct relationship between predator control to help protect livestock and increased Sage Grouse populations.

Dave Allison explained that our local working group will eventually become an extension of the Utah Partners for Conservation (UPC). The Uintah Basin group will be one of the “zones” that the UPC group will coordinate with for funding of projects.

### **Actions Taken**

The group decided to monitor a range management project in our area to record and document the findings.

Everyone was reminded of their individual assignments on the written plan and they should bring their information to the next meeting.

Next meeting agenda items:

- review progress of assignments and discuss needs and issues – add our data to the written plan
- Brian Maxfield to report on 2004 lek data
- if other agenda items are added, this will be communicated in the reminder email a few days before

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the meeting

**Next meeting: Friday, June 18, 2004, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
City-County Building on Main Street in Vernal, UT,  
North Conference Room.**

**Follow-up Needed**

Dave to follow up with Karen Courts as to the Ute Tribes decision on their involvement with the group and the plan.

Brian will complete and summarize 2004 lek data.

Todd will reschedule with Rick Baxter to give his Strawberry valley presentation.

Individual assignments are shown in the attached conservation plan.